

Vance lieutenant living two dreams

by Kent Cummins  
Chief of News

Some people spend an entire lifetime pursuing a dream. Corey Edmonds feels fortunate to be living two.

The 25-year-old Edmonds is a second lieutenant in the Air Force and a professional football player.

"Coming out of college I had the choice to play in the Canadian League or Indoor Football League," said Lieutenant Edmonds, a communications officer with Vance's 71st Communications Squadron. "I was invited to some combines (tryouts) but turned them down to join the Air Force."

Lieutenant Edmonds graduated from Huron University, S.D., where he was a two-time all-American running back.

After opting to serve his country, the young lieutenant assumed he had hung his cleats up forever.

But he couldn't quit playing the game he loves. He was the leader and quarterback for the base varsity flag-football team where his moves frustrated a lot of defensive players.

Then the Crude was born and Lieutenant Edmonds' professional football dreams were rekindled.

The Oklahoma Crude, a newly formed member of the National Indoor Football League, decided to call Enid home and Lieutenant Edmonds dusted off his pads, and with encouragement from his commander, tried out for the team. He made it.

"A lot of us stop dreaming way too early and start doing what we feel we have to do, not what we want to do," said Maj. Michael Shephard, 71st CS commander. "I wanted Lieutenant Edmonds to be able to look back in a few years and be satisfied that he tested himself against professional football players instead of regretting that he never took the chance."

A starting wide receiver and return specialist for the Crude, he stands 5 foot 9 inches tall and tips the scales at 175 pounds. Because of his size people may disregard the lieutenant as a 'pro' football-type player. That would be a mistake, according to one of his coaches, a 10-year veteran of the game.

"He is one of the best kids I've ever coached in my life," said Jerry Hamlett, offensive coordinator and special team's coach for the Oklahoma Crude.

There are no limits to what Corey can do when it comes to professional football, said Coach Hamlett.

Coach Hamlett is not only wowed by the lieutenant's football prowess he's also impressed with Corey as a person.

"Corey is very respectful and he works well with people," said Coach Hamlett. "If the Air Force does for everybody what it has done for him, then I think everybody needs to join the Air Force."

"I have two young boys myself and if they grow up to be half the person Corey is I'll be happy," said the coach.

Lieutenant Edmonds credits his discipline and work ethic to his upbringing and the Air Force.

"I grew up in a military family, so I had discipline and work ethic instilled in me," he said. "Both my parents were in the Navy."

Being an Air Force officer garnered him a lot of respect from his football teammates, he said.

"I've gained a lot of respect on the team. They all call me 'soldier man' and I keep saying no ... I'm an airman," Lieutenant Edmonds said with a grin. "I gained a lot of respect from the team because of my discipline and hard work. They know I'm going to get the job done."

He gets it done.

"I go out there and try to do my best," he said. "I'm not the type to talk trash. I'm out there to compete. I let my game speak for itself."

It speaks loud.

"He has great discipline and work ethic," said Coach Hamlett. "He doesn't say a whole lot, but he performs on the field."

Lieutenant Edmonds was only able to start five games before duty called him to attend a communications officer school at Keesler Air Force Base, Miss. But, in just a handful of games, he caught 28 passes including five receptions for touchdowns. He also scored two rushing TDs.

That's enough to convince Coach Hamlett of one thing.

"If the Crude is back next year, he'll be the first person called."

The coaches aren't the only ones who want Corey back next year. His fans are rooting for his return.

"It was such a thrill to watch him on the field," said Major Shephard. "He was 'Mr. Excitement' game in and game out. During the season, many of the fans from the base migrated down to the corner of the arena nearest the team to cheer for him. It unofficially became 'Corey's Corner.'"

The military man slash football hero awes the younger fans too. During and after games, kids huddle around him for autographs.

"It's real cool," said Lieutenant Edmonds with a laugh. "It makes me happy because they're having a good time and I'm actually being a role model."

"I respect his commitment to both his Air Force career and his football craft," said Major Shephard. "All the players would hang around the field after the games to give autographs and meet the fans. After every intense game when 'number 4' played his heart out, he'd stand on the field and sign autographs and take pictures as long as the fans wanted him to."

Although his Air Force training put a temporary hold on his NIFL career, Lieutenant Edmonds wouldn't have it any other way.

"One thing I never had to tell him was that the Air Force came first," said his commander. "He missed a lot of practices because of his work ethic. He had to finish his Air Force job first. He's also volunteered to deploy during our next Aerospace Expeditionary Force rotation."

Some people say you can't have the best of both worlds ... Lieutenant Edmonds may disagree.

Team Vance survives first round of winter

by Kent Cummins  
Chief of News

Vance members received an icy reminder of Oklahoma's fickle weather last week when freezing rain, sleet, snow and frigid temperatures struck weeks before the official start of winter.

Although the winter solstice doesn't occur until Dec. 22, Mother Nature took a frosty jab at northern Oklahoma shutting down schools and causing employees to slide into work a little later than normal.

According to the 71st Flying Training Wing commander it's a reminder for people to be prepared.

"We survived our first round of winter weather," said Col. A.J. Stewart. "Whether flying, driving or walking, we all need to remember to plan accordingly, slow down and think safety first."

Vance's team of meteorologists has the unenviable task of predicting northern Oklahoma's seemingly unpredictable weather.

"Oklahoma weather changes rapidly and can be difficult to forecast," said Capt. John Sandifer, Weather Flight commander. "The primary reason is our location in the south-central United States."

According to Captain Sandifer the Gulf of Mexico and Rocky Mountains influence the wintertime weather here.

"The Gulf of Mexico provides abundant moisture for severe weather in the summer and significant snow, freezing rain and icing in the winter," said Captain Sandifer. "The Rocky mountains act like a dam and funnels weather systems from Canada southward. This brings us cold air and strong northerly winds. The Rockies also act like a sponge to wring out moisture from the mid- and low-levels in the atmosphere. The Gulf of Mexico often replaces this low-level moisture leaving the midlevels dry ... one of the ingredients for severe weather.

"These factors act together and often cook up widely different kinds of weather even with only minor differences in the ingredients," the captain explained. "One of the main reasons winter weather is so difficult to forecast here is that only minor changes in the direction and speed of weather systems locate them to places where they are often dramatically influenced by Gulf moisture, strong

temperature differences across the state and dramatic wind shifts as you go up in the atmosphere. Oklahoma and Kansas are centrally located and more vulnerable to these influences than other areas."

When winter weather approaches, Vance's Disaster Preparedness officials urge people to keep posted on winter weather conditions, through radio and television broadcasts.

According to 1st Lt. Heather Kekic, chief of public affairs, it's also important for people to monitor local radio and TV stations to get messages concerning "late or essential personnel only" reporting messages for Vance members.

"If you are unable to get the information you need from television or radio sources contact your supervisor," said Lieutenant Kekic.

Disaster Preparedness officials suggest several protective actions for people to take with the onslaught of winter weather:

- Keep an adequate supply of heating fuel on hand at home and have some type of emergency heating equipment and fuel on hand to keep at least one room of your house warm enough to be livable.

- Stock an emergency supply of food and water, as well as emergency cooking equipment such as a camp stove. However, ensure adequate ventilation when using any equipment that burns fuel.

- Have a battery-powered radio and extra batteries on hand, in case electric power is cut off, people can still hear weather forecasts, information and advice broadcast by local authorities.

- Flashlights and lanterns with fresh batteries should be on hand.

- If spending time outdoors, wear several layers of loose fitting, lightweight and warm clothing rather than a single layer of thick clothing. Mittens are warmer than gloves. Use a hood to protect your head and face and to cover your mouth to protect your lungs from the extremely cold air.

- People should not overexert themselves.

- Travel only when necessary.

- Make sure vehicles are well maintained and equipped with chains and snow tires if needed.

- Never leave without a full gas tank and try not to go below half a tank.

- Travel with another person, if possible.

- Make sure someone knows where you are going, your approximate schedule and your estimated time of arrival at your destination.

- Have emergency supplies in the car such as blankets or sleeping bag, candles, matches, quick energy food, drinking water, flares, first aid kit, shovel, cat litter or sand for traction, emergency heating sources, and flashlight with batteries.

-- Bridges and overpasses freeze first. Slow down before the bridge or overpass and avoid sudden changes in speed or direction while on them. Review your vehicles' instructions on the use of your particular braking system. Anti-lock and non anti-lock brakes require different techniques for effective stopping in slippery road conditions.

-- If a person gets stuck in snow, straighten the wheels and accelerate slowly. Avoid spinning the tires. Use sand or cinders under the drive wheels.

-- Keep calm if you get in trouble. If you get stuck in winter storm conditions and help is not immediately visible, don't leave your car. Poor visibility and frigid temperatures can be deadly.

-- If struck, depending on outside temperatures, a person should run their vehicle for 10 minutes every hour, opening a window slightly to allow ventilation and prevent carbon monoxide poisoning. Exercise to maintain body heat but don't overexert. Huddle with other passengers; use a coat for a blanket.

-- Keep the exhaust pipe clear so that fumes don't back up into the car.

Former student earns Distinguished Flying Cross for ...Heroic efforts

by Kent Cummins  
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On January 11, 1944, a young first lieutenant helped land a battle-damaged B-17 Flying Fortress on a small rural airfield near Cambridge, England.

Almost 60 years later, Francis Hoad, 80, was recognized for his heroic efforts Friday during a ceremony at Vance. Senator Jim Inhofe and Congressman Frank Lucas presented Mr. Hoad with the Distinguished Flying Cross.

"We are here to honor an American hero," Senator Inhofe told the standing room only crowd gathered at the base auditorium.

"That was our first raid that we ever went on, we were pretty green," said Mr. Hoad, reliving the day.

After dropping a dozen 500-pound bombs over Oschersleben, Germany, the B-17 crew was returning to England when their Flying Fortress suffered severe damage from anti-aircraft fire over Holland.

"We were pretty happy we were going home," said Mr. Hoad, a 50-year Enid resident. "I don't know how it happened but an F-109 fighter got us right over the top of the tail section with a 20mm shell and took out all the flight controls."

Then 1st Lt. Hoad, who is a 1943 graduate of Vance pilot training, was the co-pilot. His pilot was 1st Lt. George Bingham.

After being hit, the plane "just keeled over and started down," said Mr. Hoad. "We had no control. We were diving at over 300 mph. It was beginning to vibrate."

They gained control and headed for Royal Air Force Ludham auxiliary airfield.

Once over friendly territory, Lieutenant Hoad ordered the eight other crew members to bail out in case the landing attempt failed. Lieutenants Bingham and Hoad only had autopilot controls. The delicate manipulations they had to perform were very difficult.

They decided to make three landing attempts and if they failed they would bail out and ditch the aircraft.

"We had a plan," said Mr. Hoad. "That's the way you do this. You don't keep trying it 'til you kill yourself, you have a plan and then do it."

"I was supposed to aim it for the runway. George had power and elevation," said Mr. Hoad. "We had a little bit of control over it, but not much."

The B-17 wing is 103 feet across so they were concerned about putting the wing into the ground when turning.

They made their first attempt, but didn't get lined up with the runway.

"We decided to get further out. We got lined up again. This time I had it lined up with the taxiway, it was not a runway," Mr. Hoad said.

On their third and final try they got the plane lined up perfectly at about 100 feet altitude, but there was another problem.

"We didn't plan on something," Mr. Hoad said. "There was a house between us and the runway and we didn't see it 'til we got close."

As they approached the house the pilot pulled it up but Lieutenant Hoad felt a thump. Their landing gear had clipped the chimney on the house. They got the aircraft down but they lost control and it went off into the field and came to a stop in the dirt. But, they were on the ground.

The action was just beginning for the young lieutenant. Three months later, he volunteered to co-pilot for another B-17 crew and was shot down by enemy 105mm coastal guns. Mr. Hoad spent 13 months as a prisoner of war.

"I got shot down on my 13th mission," he said. "It was a fluke, a lucky shot. They got us over Oostende (Belgium) and took out the number three and four engines.

"Everybody in back of the plane was killed," he said. "The navigator got hit and I got hit. We got peppered real bad."

They ditched the aircraft in the North Sea. The Germans captured them as their life raft floated ashore in Calais, France.

As a Distinguished Flying Cross recipient, Mr. Hoad, who served 27 years in the Army Air Corps and Air Force Reserve, is in good company. Others who've received the medal include Capt. Charles A. Lindbergh, Navy Cmdr. Richard E. Byrd and Amelia Earhart.

But, Mr. Hoad, said humbly, "I wanted it (the medal) for my kids."

Ice storm hits, Team Vance responds

Base members rally,  
provide shelter, food;  
begin clean-up effort

by Kent Cummins  
Chief of News

What many are calling the worst ice storm to hit the Enid area in 100 years slammed into Vance Jan. 30.

The ice toppled trees and downed power lines leaving the base without electricity for four days. But, the winter storm also did something else ... it signaled a call to action for Team Vance.

Within hours after the storm pummeled the base, Vance members rallied together to ensure people were sheltered and fed.

"After the storm hit we lost complete base power, including base housing and the dorms. Our number one priority was to care for our people. Our training paid off. We immediately initiated an ATSO (Ability to Survive and Operate) focus to secure food, shelter and heat for Team Vance. In turn, we accomplished a full accounting for everyone and their family," said Col. Doug Raaberg, 71st Flying Training Wing commander.

"Headquarters Air Education and Training Command was our greatest ally to muster the resources we needed from Altus Air Force Base, Okla., Sheppard AFB, Texas, and McConnell AFB, Kan.," Colonel Raaberg added. "We can't thank them enough for their prompt response in this emergency."

Within 24 hours after the freezing rain began falling, Team Vance established an emergency feeding facility at the Community Chapel Activity Center and a shelter at the Bradley Fitness and Sports Center. Within 48 hours, most of the base living quarters had heat and lights.

"More than 40 generators were used to support the base during the power outage," said Donald Craigie, DynCorp program manager. "Clean up crews will be working for the next few weeks clearing debris and trimming trees throughout the base."

DynCorp personnel distributed lighting units and portable heaters throughout the base, providing temporary relief at places such as the front gate, lodging, commissary, Community Chapel Activity Center, Fitness and Sports Center and the Security Force military working dog kennels.

The weight of the ice tipped many of the base's T-37 jets back on their tail sections with their noses and landing gear lifted off the ground. Despite the dramatic look the ice gave the aircraft, the damage was minimal.

"Many aircraft were put in hangars to minimize exposure to the ice, and those exposed were checked each day for proper grounding, protective covers and damage," said Mr. Craigie. "So far only one T-38 angle of attack probe and one T-37 tie-down lug were damaged and repairs have already been completed."

"Emergency situations like this storm are always stressful; however, Team Vance successfully weathered the worst ice storm in 100 years," said Mr. Craigie. "Vance aircraft were back in the air within 25 hours of power restoration to the base."

When the storm hit, one of the first people to get "the call" from Colonel Raaberg was Senior Airman Tim Castleman from the base Chapel. Airman Castleman, and his wife Roxanne, opened the CCAC the evening of Jan. 30 and lived there until Sunday.

Initially, Family Support Center members bought food from the only local grocery store that was open, and then the staff from Services, including the Bowling Center and Club, along with the commissary, donated food for the CCAC. The commissary provided the bulk of the food to sustain the operation.

In light of the overwhelming support, Airman Castleman joked, "this is the only natural disaster that I've ever gained weight participating in. But seriously, the ordeal was enlightening," he said. "A couple of weeks ago I was really thinking about the core values and service before self. Unfortunately a lot of my job is paperwork at a desk and you kind of lose sight," explained Airman Castleman. "For me to be directly involved in the mission and to see that you're helping people, and you get that direct satisfaction ... you give a person a meal, they eat it, they're happy, they're full ... that's direct."

According to Family Support Flight Chief Dave McCoy, volunteers served 12 meals over four days which fed more than 5,000 people. Mr. McCoy said volunteers included professional counselors, military spouses and airmen.

"Everybody seemed to want to help during the crisis so therefore they did whatever it was that needed to be done," said Mr. McCoy. "We're trying to figure out how it all came together and worked ... it's because it had too."

The 71st Logistics Squadron commander also was awed by Vance members' response.

"I would have to say that in 24 years of Air Force service, I have never seen such an outpouring of help as we have seen these past few days," said Maj. Mark Luttschwager. "There have been so many people that have worked so many hours without any thought of what was in it for them. Unselfish concern for the well-being of Vance personnel would be the best way to categorize it."

Tim Mathison, director of Services for Vance, echoed the major's feelings. "The one thing that really stuck out in my mind as I reflect on the last few days was the true Team Vance spirit that was displayed. Enlisted, officers, civilians and contractors all worked side-by-side to look out for the welfare of the base and community."

Other bases rallied to assist Vance during the storm. "We also received help from other Air Force bases," added Major Luttschwager. "Sheppard AFB sent several people who brought generators. They helped restore power in the housing area. Altus AFB also provided generators, along with 200 cots and sleeping bags for the shelter at the fitness center."

Recovery efforts at Vance extended beyond the gates of the base, as the Air Force worked closely with Garfield County Emergency Services and the local Red Cross in support of the city of Enid. One of the most critical areas of support, according to Colonel Raaberg, was providing generators to the City of Enid to ensure the water supply to area residents continued flowing.



"Teamwork is what made it all happen," said Colonel Raaberg. "This ordeal proved that 'Team Vance' is much more than a phrase."

There are success and motivation posters hanging throughout the CCAC. One of the posters hanging near the food serving line displays the word 'Teamwork' with a photo of a tree covered in ice and snow. "How appropriate ...," said Airman Castleman.

'Play it safe' when it comes to sports

by Kent Cummins  
Chief of News

Vance firefighters responded to the Bradley Fitness and Sports Center Oct. 10 after a student pilot injured his ankle while playing basketball.

Although the injury turned out to be a sprained ankle, according to Vance Safety officials, incidents like this underscore the need for people to keep safety in mind when participating in fitness, sports and recreational activities.

On average Vance has about 75 sport-related mishaps annually, said George Wagner, Wing Safety specialist.

"Operational Risk Management is not only for the flight line, it is applicable to off-duty as well," said Lt. Col. Len Litton, chief of Safety. "While it is important to exercise regularly to maintain your physical fitness, think about the risks associated with a particular activity before you begin. Once you decide to participate, make sure you have the proper equipment and have done everything possible to prevent injury."

Injuries can hamper the mission, especially for student pilots.

"If you are a student pilot, your primary purpose for being at Vance is to train to become a military aviator," said Colonel Litton. "We can't teach you to fly if your leg is in a cast."

The 71st Operations Group commander agrees.

"Our students should do everything possible to prevent sport-related injuries," said Col. Keith Snyder, 71st OG commander. "Proper warm-up and equipment use immediately come to mind. While I encourage all of our student pilots to participate in sporting and recreational activities, they should use sound judgment in the activities they participate in as well as recognizing their personal limits, then not exceed them."

The Vance Fitness Center staff is available to help people when it comes to conditioning and tips to avoid injuries, said Adam Sloat, Fitness Program manager.

"There are steps people can take to avoid injuries," he said.

"The main thing to remember is just because it is not hot does not mean an individual does not sweat; they still need to drink lots of water," said Mr. Sloat. "People should avoid starting exercise dehydrated."

Mr. Sloat said those participating in sports should drink at least two to three glasses of water a half hour to one hour before a game, drink at least one to two glasses every 15 minutes during a game and drink at least five to six glasses after a game and continue to drink until fluid losses are replaced.

According to Mr. Sloat, people can prevent sport-related injuries by maintaining an adequate level of conditioning respective to the sport.

People should keep four categories in mind when exercising to stay in good physical condition, said Mr. Sloat. They are: strength and endurance; coordination and skill; cardiovascular fitness and flexibility.

For more information about fitness and conditioning programs, Vance members can call Mr. Sloat at 5171.